



**Senator Feinstein Calls on Department of Homeland Security  
to Fill In or Demolish Existing Border Tunnels**

February 6, 2007

**Washington, DC** – *In a letter to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today called for all border tunnels to be filled in or demolished immediately to prevent continued use by illegal border crossers.*

*Senator Feinstein authored legislation in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress to criminalize the act of constructing or financing a tunnel or subterranean passage across an international border into the United States. The bill language was included FY'07 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations bill and has been signed into law.*

*The following is the text of Senator Feinstein's letter to Secretary Chertoff:*

**February 6, 2007**

**Secretary Michael Chertoff  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Nebraska Avenue Center, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20528**

**Dear Secretary Chertoff:**

**I am writing once again to express my concern about the Department of Homeland Security's prioritization of federal efforts to locate, investigate, and prevent tunnels and subterranean passages into the United States across our borders.**

**Recent news reports indicate that the Department of Homeland Security has not filled seven of the largest tunnels discovered under the U.S.-Mexico border in recent years. At least one of these tunnels has been sitting unfilled for 13 years. I understand that the tunnel openings have been "plugged" and that motion sensors are used to ward off attempts to create new tunnels, but these measures appear to be insufficient to deter smugglers determined to reuse these passages for criminal activities.**

**When we spoke last February after the discovery of the half-mile long tunnel in San Diego, you informed me that the Department had sufficient discretionary funding to**

demolish that and any other tunnels. Subsequent inquiries by my staff to DHS officials regarding tunnel demolition revealed that additional funding would be required from Congress, but it was unclear exactly what level of funding was necessary. Most recently, Customs and Border Protection officials have informed my staff of a September 2006 survey they conducted that determined the cost to demolish the existing seven tunnels is \$2,743,465, but that the work had not been done because "Congress has not provided us with the money."

I believe it is imperative that these seven tunnels, and any other discovered in the future, be filled in or demolished as soon as possible. If the Department requires additional funding or authorization to complete this task, please let me know as soon as possible. Additionally, I hope that the Department's report on border tunnels, which was required by the 2007 appropriations bill and is due February 8, is forthcoming and will help clarify border tunnel responsibilities within the Department and any challenges that need to be addressed to Congress and the Administration.

I appreciate your consideration of my inquiry and I look forward to your speedy response.

Best regards.

Sincerely yours,

Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

###